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K. Great Brit. - George III.

THE
CURATES ACT
EXAMINED,

AND ITS ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES
FAIRLY DISCUSSED;

CONTAINING

*Observations how to render its Operation effectual, and
to counteract the Dangers of some of its Clauses;*

WITH

Earnest Addresses to the Members of the late
HOUSE OF COMMONS, the NEW PARLIAMENT, and
the BENEFICED CLERGY,

And an humble Apology to the Right Reverend the
BISHOPS and METROPOLITANS:

CONCLUDING WITH

A WORD OF ADVICE TO THE CURATES.

By a COUNTRY CURATE.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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P R E F A C E.

THE Subject of these Pages is of the utmost importance at this period. When it is considered that for more than EIGHTY years past, and consequently far beyond the knowledge of any Clergyman now living, nothing has occurred of a nature similar to the Act which has lately passed for the further support and maintenance of Curates, it may well claim a more than ordinary attention.

During the discussion of its principle and clauses in the House of Commons, the Author,

thor, with an assiduous and zealous anxiety, marked its progress, and attended to the arguments for and against its several parts. The magnitude of the object proposed to be obtained excited his fears for the event; and though the result is not, as he has stated, exactly what might be wished for the interests of religion, his reflections, he hopes, may have some weight in directing every person concerned how to profit by it, and to render it, as much as possible, subservient to that great end, as well as the comfort of the Inferior Clergy.

4 OC 58

May 24th, 1796.

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THE
CURATES ACT
EXAMINED, &c.

NEVER was there a period in which the claims of the lower classes of the People on the friends of humanity were more urgent, or in which those claims were more liberally attended to, than in the years 1795 and 1796. It will form an æra in the pages of history and chronology, to notice the necessities of the laborious Poor, from the extreme severity of the long winter of the former of those years, and the consequent increase in price of all the conveniences of life; and the subsequent and almost unparalleled advance of the value of bread in particular to more than double the price of plentiful seasons, for which no moderate recompence or wages for labour could possibly be sufficient, forms a striking feature in the picture of the times.

It would be foreign from the design of this treatise to enlarge on the history of the late extraordinary

nary price of corn, and the means that have been practised to keep up that price beyond the bounds of moderation. Suffice it to observe, that the circular letters dispersed through every diocese of the kingdom, respecting the use of mixed bread to diminish the consumption of wheat, and to produce a supply for the people of wholesome food at a cheaper rate, has a manifest affinity with the present subject.

Melancholy indeed was the gloomy intelligence to a great part of the inferior Clergy, who were officially required to read the instructions of their diocesans, containing the minutes of the two houses of Parliament and of the privy council, respecting the supposed scarcity of wheat. Irksome was the task of recommending and enforcing the expediency of adopting measures, which in their respective parishes might seem to them to be best calculated to answer the end proposed to be obtained by those instructions. Already groaning under the pressure of the times, and with so gloomy a prospect before them, it is extremely difficult to say how they should be enabled to summon up philosophy sufficient to combat the alarm of such an accumulating evil. It seems almost beyond the power of imagination to conceive what arguments they could use to promote a spirit of contentment and resignation in the minds of their people, as
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their duty seemed on that occasion more peculiarly to require.

The design of these pages is to consider more especially the distressed condition of the inferior Clergy, whose incomes are scanty, and their resources limited and confined; though I am convinced that there are many, whose supplies are more liberal, and above mediocrity, who severely feel the oppressive state of the times. If we cast our eyes around us, it will be found that there are too, too many, who are now labouring under the greatest difficulties; many who are struggling with the incumbrance of Families, whose calamity is on that account the more feelingly pungent. For when we consider that many of these have no other resources than what arise from their scanty stipend, the feeling mind cannot fail to reflect seriously and painfully on their hard situation.

Some such reflections as these, it may be supposed, were the motives that led to the introduction of the bill proposed for their relief into the Upper House of Parliament; to meliorate and soften the condition of a distressed body of men, and those too of a description that ought to place them in a better state, whose sensations must be the more acute in proportion to their cultivated and extended capacity and understanding. In the midst of the liberal attention bestowed on the afflicted and

oppressed by persons of all ranks, the friends of humanity and religion saw the necessity of extending assistance to the inferior Clergy, and readily and liberally adopted the plan for improving their pitiable case; and it had made its way through the upper house of Parliament, almost before any of those who were to be benefited by it had the smallest idea of the proposed relief being in contemplation. All at once, like a mid-day sun from the intervention of a dense cloud, it rushed out in full blaze, and an overflowing measure of gratitude began to swell in their breasts. They began to hope that their condition would now be rendered, what it certainly ought to be, truly respectable and independent. They began to awake to new life, and fondly to hope that the comforts and conveniences of the world, of which they had long taken a farewell, once more awaited them. They dwelt on the pleasing theme with an excess of joy and transport that is more easily to be felt than described, and, I had almost said, began to possess a laudable pride and emulation that had long been effectually subdued, of being restored to that rank in the community to which their talents, their education, and their profession alike entitled them.

It cannot escape the observation of any one, who has at all suffered his thoughts to turn towards the
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distresses and hardships of this body of people, that their situation has long been truly wretched and deplorable; and the friend of humanity and religion must some time or other, perhaps but too frequently, have been a spectator of the abject and humiliating measures which necessity but too commonly compels them to pursue. With a serious and sympathizing concern for the interests of Religion will it be regretted by such a person, that its effects on the credit of the Religion they are commissioned to teach and declare to mankind, must be truly alarming. Can we then wonder that persons of this description should have felt an equally laudable anxiety for the ultimate success of this benevolent exertion to remove every reasonable cause of complaint, so far as general remedies can be applied to the particular circumstances of particular livings in various parts of the kingdom?

When it is considered that little has been done of an effectual nature to promote and obtain this desirable end, the comfort and independence of the inferior Clergy, since the time of Queen ANNE, it must be admitted that it was high time to think of lessening the evil. For an interval of more than EIGHTY years, wherein the expences of subsistence have long been considered as bearing a three-fold ratio or proportion at least, and have lately exceeded all moderate bounds, this very useful

ful body of men have been permitted to languish in the same humiliating condition.

The Act of Queen ANNE, though deemed a great acquisition towards ensuring the happiness of the inferior Clergy, was soon found on experience to be grossly defective in its operation, with respect to the comfort and independence of that class of men for which it proposed to make a provision. Within a very few years after, a spirited work made its appearance, entitled, *The miseries and hardships of the inferior Clergy*; and that publication, though it professed to confine the grievances complained of to the Curates in and about LONDON, has noticed many arguments, and brought forward many observations and reasonings that have been equally applicable since that period to every other part of the kingdom.

From a view of the arguments introduced in that work (though I am free to confess that exceptions may be taken to some parts of it in point of language), the manner in which the provisions of that Act for the relief of Curates had been and were at that time evaded, appears very forcibly; and the attentive and observing mind is but too strikingly admonished and directed to those evils in the conduct too generally prevalent amongst the superior Clergy of the present times throughout the nation. The calamitous state of the inferior

ferior Clergy is there depicted in a very feeling manner; and, in its application to their present condition, the resemblance is but too strongly marked, and the correspondence too fully demonstrated.

At a time, therefore, when all that is dear to man is at stake;—at a season when his religion is converted into ridicule, his loyalty lampooned and derided or at least grossly misrepresented, and his humanity laughed at and put out of countenance; it behoves the friends of the civil and ecclesiastical constitution of this kingdom to come forward, and manfully and courageously to rally round the throne and the altar, in defence of both. A more acceptable piece of service, it is presumed, there need not be, nor perhaps is it in the power of mortals to perform one more acceptable; a more meritorious and dignified exercise of talents there surely cannot be, and it seems scarcely possible for man to display a more deserving one.

But it is certain, that nothing can contribute so much to the credit of religion and the respectability of its ministers, as a discretionary power in the hands of Bishops. They are properly the fathers and guardians of all the Clergy in their respective dioceses, both superiors and inferiors. I know not that too much is asserted, in maintaining that the violent clamour raised against such a power must,
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to say the least, proceed from motives not very favourable to the cause of Religion. That it has a strong tendency to undermine and destroy the bulwarks of the Religion of the established Church, is what no considering person can attempt to deny, but if there should be found any who are bold enough to resist and oppose the conclusion I have drawn, let me prevail upon them, if they wish to meet the subject fairly, to suspend their judgment till they are acquainted with the contents of these pages. If they shall not then be satisfied, it will be no improper measure to attribute it to prejudice, or to some other motive that cannot so well be publicly charged upon any person ; because we must only judge of their hearts by the nature and purport of their proceedings. Yet is it shrewdly to be suspected, that an enmity to all Bishops whatever had more weight and influence in these arguments against the discretionary authority of the Bishops, than the authors may be willing to avow or acknowledge. For by depriving them of the necessary authority to regulate the proceedings of the two classes of Clergy, in which their judgment and experience must be essentially serviceable, the transition is natural to consider them as superfluous and unnecessary, whenever a favourable opportunity presents itself more publicly and successfully to declare their sentiments. By shack-

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ling their hands, and disabling them from executing one of the most important acts of episcopal jurisdiction, because most adapted to the common regulations of the Clergy, and thereby reducing them to a non-entity or what is tantamount to it; does it need any great skill or penetration to discover to what end such a gross infringement of their privileges must evidently be directed? Is it not easy to perceive to what motives such proceedings can only be attributed?

As this discretionary power of Bishops, for which I am contending, has been sanctioned in the lower house of Parliament as it had very justly and properly passed through the upper house, though shackled with some restraints, to be noticed hereafter, it is no unwarrantable exaggeration of its effects to say, that the weight and influence of Religion will speedily gain ground in a country where it has so long been declining, to the great regret of the serious and well-disposed.

The effects of such a clause will be very conspicuous in a short time. From the moment that the efficient Ministers of our established Religion shall be rendered comfortable and independent, by such an augmentation of their stipends as to their respective dioceses shall appear just and proper, considering the cure and the value of the living, by the operation of such a clause,—from that mo-

ment, I repeat it with confidence, the inferior Clergy will become more respectable in the eyes of the laity, and the over-bearing and opulent will not have it in their power to hold them out as objects of beneficence, or to treat them as dependants and inferiors.

To counteract the object of any public measure of government, some plausible pretext is seldom wanting to those who have no desire to see such a measure carried into effect. In applying this general observation to the present case, will it not be found, beyond all contradiction, that this is the fact? Can there then be a more acceptable employment for any individual to exercise himself in, than that of examining the nature and tendency of this very obnoxious clause, about which so many sarcastic remarks have been made with unwarrantable severity and almost unparalleled wantonness, and describing the salutary effects of its operation? A necessary result from such an enquiry and description will be a demonstration of the futility of the arguments advanced against the clause, and a vindication of the relief it holds out to the inferior Clergy.

But, in order to discuss the nature and tendency of the bill called the CURATES BILL, and entitled, "An Act for the further Support and Maintenance of Curates within the Church of England,"

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it will be proper to recite the said Bill, as it came from the Lords; and then to compare it with the Act, as it was regulated and settled in the Committee of the House of Commons, and as it finally became a Law,

CURATES BILL.

A Bill, intituled, An Act for the further Support and Maintenance of Curates within the Church of England.

“ **W**HEREAS, in and by a Statute passed in the 12th year of the reign of Queen Anne, it is enacted, That if any Rector or Vicar, having care of souls, should, after the 29th of September one thousand seven hundred and fourteen, nominate and present any Curate to the Bishop or Ordinary, to be licensed or admitted to serve the Cure of such Rector or Vicar in his absence, the said Bishop or Ordinary, having regard to the greatness of the Cure, and the value of the Ecclesiastical Benefice of such Rector or Vicar, should, on or before the granting such licence, appoint, by writing under his hand and seal, a sufficient certain stipend or allowance, not exceeding fifty pounds per annum, nor less than twenty pounds per an-

num, to be paid or answered at such times as he should think fit, by such Rector or Vicar to such Curate, for his support and maintenance; and if it should appear to the Bishop or Ordinary, upon complaint or otherwise, that any Curate of such Rector or Vicar, licensed or admitted before the twenty-ninth of September, one thousand seven hundred and fourteen, had not a sufficient maintenance, it should be lawful to and for the said Bishop or Ordinary to appoint him a certain stipend or allowance, in like manner as before mentioned; and in case any difference should arise between any Rector or Vicar and his Curate, touching such stipend or allowance, or the payment thereof, the Bishop or Ordinary, on complaint to him made, should summarily hear and determine the same; and in case of neglect or refusal to pay such stipend or allowance, might sequester the profit of such Benefice for and until payment thereof:

“ And whereas, in many places, the provision made in and by the said Statute, for the support and maintenance of such Curate, is now become insufficient; be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons in this Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that it shall and may be lawful for the Bishop or Ordinary to appoint, under

der his hand and seal, any stipend or allowance for any Curate heretofore nominated or employed, or hereafter to be nominated and employed, not exceeding seventy-five pounds per annum, over and besides, on livings where the Rector or Vicar does not personally reside four months in the year at least, the use of the Rectory or Vicarage House, and the garden and stable thereunto belonging, such use to be granted to the said Curate for the space of twelve calendar months, by the authority of the Bishop or Ordinary, under his hand and seal, with power in the said Bishop and Ordinary to renew the grant from time to time, or the further sum of fifteen pounds per annum, in lieu of such house, garden, and stable, in case there shall be none such, or that it shall appear to the Bishop or Ordinary not to be convenient to allot and assign the same to such Curate; which said stipend or stipends shall be paid and recovered in such and the same manner as the stipend payable under and by virtue of the said recited Act; provided always, that the said house, garden, and stable, shall be for the use of the said Curate and his family, only during his actual residence in the said Rectory and Vicarage House.

“ And whereas by an Act, passed in the first year of his late Most Gracious Majesty King George the First, it was enacted, that all Churches, Curacies,

Curacies, and Chapels, which should be augmented by the Governor of the late Queen Anne's bounty, should be from thenceforth perpetual Cures and Benefices: and whereas it is expedient that such augmented Churches, Curacies, and Chapels, should be subjected to the rules as Benefices; be it further enacted, that such augmented Churches, Curacies and Chapels, shall be considered in Law as Benefices Presentative, and that the License thereto shall operate in the same manner as institution to such Benefices, and shall render void or voidable all other Livings, in like manner as institution to the said Benefices; and that it shall be lawful for the Bishop or Ordinary within whose jurisdiction such augmented Church, Curacy, or Chapel, shall lie, to appoint, under his hand and seal, any stipend or allowance for the officiating Curate, to be nominated or employed by the perpetual Curate or incumbent thereof, not exceeding seventy-five pounds per annum, for which payment the said Curate shall have the same and like remedies as are hereinbefore given to the Curates of Rectors and Vicars.

“ And whereas doubts have been lately entertained, whether the acceptance of such augmented Churches, Curacies, and Chapels, has rendered void or voidable in Law, such other Benefices as the Incumbents possessed before their acceptance of

of the same; and whereas it is fit that many Incumbents who have accepted such Churches, Curacies, and Chapels, should be quieted in the possessions of the same; it is hereby enacted and declared, that all such Benefices as were held in conjunction with augmented Cures before the passing of this Act, shall continue to be held by the present Incumbents therewith; and that it shall not be lawful to present to the said Benefices until they shall become void or voidable by death or cession, or by other lawful cause of avoidance, arising after the passing of this Act.

“ And whereas many perpetual Curacies, although not augmented by the Bounty of Queen Anne, have nevertheless become considerable in value by the improvement of the tythe or glebe of which they happen to be endowed, or by other circumstances; be it enacted by the King's Most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons in this Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, that the Bishop or Ordinary, within whose jurisdiction they lie, shall have the like power, and under the like limitations, and with the like remedies, in apportioning the stipends to be paid to the said officiating Curates, by the Curates or Incumbents of perpetual Curacies, as is hereinbefore given respecting the
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apportionment of the stipends to the Curates employed in Benefices, or in perpetual Cures augmented.

“ And whereas it is expedient that the authority of Ordinaries to license Curates, unto removed licensed Curates, should be further explained and confirmed; be it enacted and declared, that it shall be lawful for the Ordinary to license any Curate who is or shall be actually employed by the Rector, Vicar, or other Incumbent of any Parish Church or Chapel, although no express nomination of such Curate shall have been made, either in words or in writing, to the Ordinary by the said Rector, Vicar, or other Incumbent; and that the Ordinary shall have power to revoke summarily, and without process, any license granted to any Curate employed within his jurisdiction, and to remove such Curate, for such good and reasonable cause as he shall approve,”

Before I proceed to notice the Act as it now stands, it may not be improper to observe, that the Preamble or former Part of the *first* Clause is a faithful Transcript of the Act of the 12th of ANNE, Chap. 12. Sect. 1. in which two Things are to be noted, as it related to the Power of the Bishops given by that Clause, though one of these only can in any respect extend to the present Act. It was
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neceffary that the Rector or Vicar, maintaining and keeping a Curate, fhould nominate and prefent fuch Curate to the Bifhop or Ordinary to be licenfed or admitted to ferve the Cure, to give the Curate the Benefit of this Act, or the Bifhop or Ordinary a Power to carry it into Effect; and i gave alfo to the Bifhop or Ordinary a power of regulating the Stipend of thofe Curates who had been licenfed before the paffing fuch Act. Without fuch Nomination, except to Curates previously licenfed, no Power whatever vefted in the Bifhops for the Relief of the inferior Clergy; and as the Bifhops had no compulfive Power over the benefited Clergy to oblige them to nominate their Curates, as proper to be licenfed, except only at the Time of their Ordination to which a Nomination was an effential Requisite, fuch Rectors or Vicars whenever they were fo ftrongly urged by the Bifhops or Ordinaries as to be apprehenfive of the Exercife of their Authority to enjoin them to Refidence, ufually fheltered themfelves under the Protection of a civil Contract to annul the Force of it. How eafy it was for the benefited Clergy employing Curates to procure their Consent to fuch kind of Contracts, admits of no Difficulty to perceive. Of the Miferies and Hardfhips refulting to the inferior Clergy from this cautious and interefted Policy

of the beneficed Clergy, the Publication already referred to presents a most melancholy and gloomy Picture.

The *second* clause of the Bill, which extends the limitation of provision is still confined to Curates "heretofore nominated and employed, or hereafter to be nominated and employed." In the Act, as it is now passed, this forms the latter part of the first clause or section. But the same restriction of authority is here attended to as in the preamble or former part of the clause, transcribed from the 12th of ANNE, and all the provisions consequent upon it are altogether a dead letter without such nomination and employment as a Curate. There must be both, according to this clause, to ensure any relief to the inferior Clergy; but the means of evading it, as I have already shewn, have been known to operate in all their force.

After this, the present Act has introduced a clause or section, there marked as the second, respecting the power of the Bishop or Ordinary to revoke the grant of the House and to stipulate the conditions and terms to be observed by the Curate, and imposed heavy penalties on the Curate on refusing to give up the House and premises granted. But of this more hereafter, when I come to speak of its operation.

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The *third* clause of the Bill places the Curates of churches, curacies, and chapels, augmented by the Governors of Queen Anne's Bounty, in the same situation as those of benefices, but with the same imposition and necessity of nomination and employment as in the preceding clauses.

The *fourth* clause of the Bill is no otherwise connected with Curates than as it has relation to such augmented churches, curacies, and chapels, that they shall not be voidable but by death or cession of the perpetual curates or incumbents thereof.

The *fifth* clause of the Bill subjects perpetual curacies, that have increased in value by the improvement of their tithes or glebe, to the same regulations of stipend as other livings, and consequently restrains them also to the express conditions of nomination and employment.

The *sixth* and last clause of the Bill is that which has given authority to the Bishops to license Curates actually employed, even without nomination. It is this which has given so much umbrage to some gentlemen, and excited such a violent clamour and opposition. A defence of this clause, before the writer of these pages could possibly procure the Act, or know the alterations made by the House of Commons, and when it was understood to be wholly rejected, occurred to the author to be highly necessary, and a matter of the greatest im-

portance to the Clergy and to the interests of religion. But it has been suffered to remain as a part of the Act, subject, however, to an appeal, both in granting licences without nomination, and in revoking licences, to the Archbishop of the province. On this it will be more proper to enlarge hereafter, in reducing the comparative propriety of the Lords Bill, and of the Act as altered by the Commons, and assented to by the Upper House.

The title of the Act, as it has now passed, is as follows. "An Act for the further Support and Maintenance of Curates within the Church of England, and for making certain Regulations respecting the Appointment of such Curates, and the Admission of Persons to Cures augmented by Queen Anne's Bounty, with Respect to the Avoidance of other Benefices." On the due and proper operation of such an Act the Clergy of all descriptions in the Church of England must evidently feel themselves highly interested, and it shall be my endeavour to make some observations upon its provisions and cautions for the consideration of my brethren and fellow labourers in the vineyard.

Since the whole of the Bill, as it came from the Lords, has been admitted, but with the regulations already intimated, I shall have the less cause to discuss the Act in all its parts, because the leading features only will be fully sufficient for this purpose.

pose. But as one of the greatest evils arose under the act of Anne, from civil engagements and agreements, I know not how far they may retain that superior authority under the present act, which has so frequently and generally rendered all the efforts of the Bishops to redress the hardships of the inferior Clergy unavailing and useless. The only means of preventing their operation, is to decline any contracts of that kind, and to rest the merits of the duty and the quantum of the stipend for performing any cure or cures with the Bishop or his official, or whoever has the power and authority of granting those licences; who from their situation are usually the most competent judges to determine between the incumbent and his curate. If curates make such contracts, they must only blame themselves.

In considering and comparing the provisions of the two acts, it is obvious, that those of the 12th of ANNE empowered Bishops to allow a stipend of fifty pounds *per annum*, and those of the present act of the 36th of George the third have extended it to seventy-five pounds with an addition of 15 pounds, or what is deemed equivalent to it, in certain cases. This latter, it is to be noted for the consolation of resident Curates, will operate pretty general, where the value of the benefice is such as to admit the extension, or the duty so considerable as to render a greater proportion of the living a reasonable compensation

penfation only to the Curate. In thefe cafes the Bifhop or Ordinary will be empowered, without detriment or injury to the incumbent, to make fuch augmentation to the fipends of Curates as the Act allows.

Though the attempts made in the Houfe of Commons to reject the claufe, which authorizes licences to be granted to Curates employed without nomination, have failed of fuccefs, and a mode of Appeal has been fubftituted or added as a check on the operation of this authority; it may not be improper to compare the provisions of the two Acts, in cafes where their full operation is carried into effect, to fhew the extreme cruelty of thofe who refifted the claufe, and the reafonablenefs of its being rendered a part of the act. For if we confider the value of the loweft eftimate or limit in the time of Queen ANNE, which was twenty pounds at the diftance of more than eighty years paff, it is fair to conclude that it could fcarcely be of lefs value than fixty pounds now, whilft that of the high- eft eftimate or limit at that time, which was fixed at fifty pounds, can be very little if at all inferior to one hundred and fifty pounds in the prefent times.. But the Provisions of the laft Act do not extend nearly to any fuch lengths; neither was it intended that this obnoxious claufe, which has been fo much decried, fhould empower the Bifhops or Ordinaries

Ordinaries to extend those provisions beyond what they are stated in the latter part of the first clause or section of the Act as it now stands, but only to enable them to put it more generally in force.

To many of the Curates in this kingdom a small exercise of this authority will form a very comfortable addition to their income. Where the value of the benefice will not reasonably admit of a larger extension, the augmentation of ten or fifteen pounds a year will prove a most desirable source of consolation and convenience; and, with the addition of twenty pounds many will consider it almost as an equivalent to a moderate benefice. But to such persons, a full exercise of the Act will absolutely crown them with riches. However, it must not here be supposed, that the utmost extension of the provisions of the Act ought not to take place, whenever the circumstances of the benefice will suffer it, without any well-founded detriment or fair and equitable ground of objection. Though the long-continued scenes of oppression and difficulty, under which they have struggled from the pressure of the times, may have so far reduced and broken the spirits of many a worthy man, whose talents and deportment render him deserving of a better fate; the claims of justice and equity are not therefore the less to be considered, nor is he the less entitled to all the advantages

vantages which the Act can give him on this account. For this mighty sum, supposing the fullest extent of authority to be exercised which such discretionary power gives to the Bishops, which it only can be in a few instances comparatively, is but seventy-five pounds a year, with an augmentation of fifteen pounds, or what is esteemed equal to it, that of a suitable accommodation at the Parsonage House, where the incumbent does not reside four months in the year. In plain terms, compared with the Act of the 12th of ANNE, it amounts to no more than what twenty-five pounds, or at the most thirty pounds a year was then fully equivalent to; and would then be as competent for procuring the accommodations of life.

Now that the section or clause of the Act, against which such a violent clamour had been raised, has been permitted to remain, only that they have thought proper to shackle it with an appeal, all conscientious and religious persons will entertain the most reasonable and flattering hopes for the credit and interest of religion. Its operation must necessarily have an immediate tendency to render the profession more respectable, and to restore the declining reputation of a body of men, of the highest importance to the welfare of the community of which they are members. This, it may fairly be presumed, will be generally and effectually

effectually done, by the measures which this clause will enable the bishops to pursue to effect so very laudable and desirable an end.

Neither is there, I apprehend, any reason to doubt that the Bishops will in any case abuse this power. But, as the objectors have been represented to say, we will take care that they shall not, by rejecting the clause, which was intended to confer this power *in toto*; for we will exert all our influence in excluding such a clause, and not suffer it, if it is in our power to prevent it, to give them an authority that may in any respect affect a brother, a son, an uncle, a nephew, or a cousin, or any of our friends, by taking a few pounds annually out of his pocket, and obliging him to render the Curate comfortable, on whose shoulders the whole burden and care of the duty is placed. How illiberal! how inhuman!—*Illiberal*, as it respects the Bishops, who can be under no temptation to abuse their power in favour of Curates, for the temptation more usually lays on the other side; and *inhuman*, as it relates to Curates, whose situation is but too commonly such as ought to excite commiseration and pity. May it not truly be said of such persons, as of the pharisees of old, that *they bind heavy burdens, and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their*

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fingers? Thanks, however, to the more generous and candid part of the members of the House of Commons, these attempts to shackle and prevent the operation of the Act for the relief of the inferior Clergy have been frustrated; and the efforts to perpetuate oppression and indigence rendered abortive.

Having now apprized my readers what this great and generous bounty consists in, which this Act authorizes the Bishops to require from the superior Clergy to be applied to the purpose of conferring comfort on the inferior Clergy, I might proceed to address those gentlemen of the House of Commons, who were most strenuous in opposing the principal clauses which enabled the Bishops to administer the necessary and much desired relief. After this it is intended to offer some observations to the consideration of the beneficed Clergy, with a respectful and dutiful apology to the right reverend the Bishops, with the metropolitans, on the probable operation of this Act. But before I dismiss this part of my subject, it may not be improper to add a few words, which will serve to rectify some mistaken and ill-conceived notions that have been suffered to prevail to the prejudice of the Bishops. And herein I have to observe, on the subject of the clause which concluded the Curates Bill as it came from the Upper House

House of Parliament, that, notwithstanding the fullest exercise of the power proposed, I may challenge any person to prove that the provisions of the Act are nearly so good as the clause of the 12th of Queen ANNE, which is strictly recapitulated in the first part of the first clause of the present Act. For that extends, as it has been already noted, to fifty pounds a year, but the present, allowing only a moderate proportion for the difference of times, to no more than thirty pounds. However, the Curates are in duty bound to feel and entertain the most grateful and dutiful respect for the good wishes and benevolent exertions of their respective diocesans; and the bill, as it came from the House of Lords, fully demonstrates that they were impressed, on introducing it, with a thorough conviction of the great necessity of alleviating the distresses of their inferiors. It is a full refutation of the assertion which has heretofore been almost constantly made, that the inattention of the Bishops to the condition of the inferior Clergy may be deemed the grand source of complaint; and the history of this Bill, before it passed into a law, abundantly and manifestly proves that they have been unjustly stigmatized,—that the hardships and distresses of the Curates are not and ought not to be attributed to this source,—and that the odium ought no longer to be directed to

the episcopal bench, of countenancing oppression and disregarding the lower classes of their brethren.

It is foreign from my wish or design to indulge in gloomy prognostics, or in the most distant view to aid or abet the proceedings of those restless spirits, which have been but too active and busy in their attempts to create confusion and anarchy. Neither am I sufficiently acquainted with the state of religion in a neighbouring country, before the commencement of those turbulent actions which have shook its foundations to their very centre, and deluged its cities and plains with seas of blood. But if I have not been very much misinformed, a disrespect for religion and indifference towards its ministers, though protected by the powerful engine of superstition and its attendant train, was the primary and pre-disposing cause, under the direction of an over-ruling Providence, that led to this lamentable catastrophe. It behoves the people of this nation to profit by the melancholy experience of others, and to avert the wrath of the destroying angel before he comes to our own doors. It is the duty of every one to unite with heart and hand in so necessary an undertaking ; to restore and promote the exercises of pure and undisguised religion by every rational means ; to give vigour to the ministers of our sacred institutions

stitutions in the discharge of their pastoral office, by rendering them respectable in the eyes of their people, and placing them above the necessity of yielding to paltry temptations ; to infuse such an energetic power and spirit into the hearts of that useful body of men, the Curates of this nation, as shall animate them to a laudable and emulous exertion to conduct their people both by precept and example in the paths of true godliness. This, and this only, can be relied on as our safeguard and protection ; and this, as far as human means can go, or human encouragement become the instrument of promoting, will be effected by restoring that credit to the efficient ministers of our religion which has been so long rapidly and lamentably declining. A fair trial of the operation of the clause of the Curates Bill, which has been so much combated, but, happily for the nation, suffered at last to remain in the Act, will demonstrate the wisdom and policy of the measures to produce an event so much to be desired by every well-wisher to his religion and to his country.

After offering so much in favour of the Bill as it originated in the Upper House of Parliament, it may be proper to take notice of the two amendments or regulations that have been introduced by the Lower House, to which allusion has already been made. And in adverting to the former of these,

these, which constitutes the *second* clause or section of the Act, respecting the revocation of the grant of the Parsonage House, garden, and stable, or any of them, the reflecting mind is extremely concerned to perceive such a vindictive spirit, as no liberal person, on cool and deliberate consideration, would wish to avow. It provides, " That the Bishop or Ordinary shall have power, at any time, under his hand and seal, to revoke the grant to the said Curate of the said house, garden, and stable, or any of them; and also to insert in such grant such terms and conditions to be observed on the part of the Curate as he shall think reasonable; and also that the Curate shall peaceably deliver up the possession of the premises granted to him at the expiration or other sooner determination of the grant thereof; and in case he shall refuse so to do, he shall forfeit and lose to the Rector or Vicar all such parts of his stipend as shall then be unpaid, or shall thereafter become due, and also the sum of fifty pounds to such Rector or Vicar, and which shall be recoverable in an action of debt." I would not wish to be mistaken, when I say that it manifests a vindictive spirit; in which I condemn not the principle of the clause, but the penalties annexed to it. Yet I must be allowed to say, that, in the first place, it secures no time of notice to be given by such incumbent

incumbent for quitting such Parsonage, after the incumbent's obtaining a revocation of the grant; but, for any thing that appears to the contrary, subjects the Curate to an immediate relinquishing the possession of the premises that before had been granted him, whatever may be the loss or inconveniences, danger to his family, or other insurmountable objection to such speedy removal. As in all other cases between landlord and tenant, it might have been expected to have stipulated or directed that some reasonable time of notice should be necessary; and in this respect the clause appears to be extremely defective, and highly disadvantageous to the Curates. In the next place, to prevent damage or injury, it may be reasonable to subject the Curate to some fair and proper conditions for that purpose, during his possession of the premises, as well as to provide for his peaceable resignation of the said premises, any adequate cause requiring it, though, as before, it is submitted that some reasonable notice should be given, to enable him to procure suitable accommodations elsewhere. Perhaps it may be said, that the Bishops or Ordinaries will take care of these things, and not suffer the Curates to be persecuted or harassed on that account; and it is sincerely hoped that they will, for which kindness the introduction of the Bill into the Upper House affords

affords a strong presumptive proof. Unfortunately, however, if any official, to whom these concerns in many dioceses are committed, should accidentally overlook this precaution, the consequences to the Curate might be extremely serious, and he might be involved in the greatest difficulties and embarrassments, and subject to very heavy penalties, without knowing that he had done any thing to render himself liable to them. Whatever may be thought of it, the case is a very serious and alarming one; such Curate being either exposed to the hazard of being turned out of doors, with all his family, whatever may be their situation, at a minute's warning, or to have his stipend instantly withheld, by a clause that is to operate retrogressively as well as progressively, with the further calamity of being subject to be dragged into a court of justice, with all its attendant expenses, when the very sinews of that justice are cut asunder, and the means of existence at the same time withdrawn. In such a situation he has no other resource, but to submit to the hardest conditions that oppression can load him with, when it is perhaps farther stimulated and armed by a spirit of resentment for such undesigned and unintentional opposition. I would wish to hope that there are few who call themselves ministers of peace and ministers of the gospel, who will permit

mit the turbulent passions to operate in so violent a degree, especially against their brethren, and still less against those whom they employ; but so long as men are men, whatever profession they may be of, such instances of irregularity will be sometimes met with, and the very clause I am considering is in itself an irrefragable proof of it. Some kind of penalty might be allowed as reasonable; but certainly this exceeds all bounds of moderation and equity, and is the strongest indication, as I said, of a vindictive spirit. It is also highly unjust, that the penalty should be incurred, even of withholding the stipend, till reasonable notice has first been given; but the pecuniary fine is so extravagantly oppressive and cruel, that I feel a want of words to express my sentiments of it, without danger of incurring the displeasure and disapprobation of the Episcopal Bench.

Less cause of observation occurs in the other amendment, which appears to be designed as a check upon the operation of the last clause or section of the Act. The power of granting licences to Curates employed, though not nominated, and of revoking such licences and removing such Curates for such good and reasonable cause as the Ordinary shall approve, is rendered subject by the Act to an appeal to the Archbishop

of the Province. It states that the exercise of the power given to grant or revoke licences shall be " subject, nevertheless, to an appeal, as well in the case of a grant of a licence to a Curate who has not been nominated, as in the revocation of a licence granted to a Curate; such appeal to be made, in either case, to the Archbishop of the Province, and to be determined in a summary manner." Though it may be hoped, that such appeals will seldom be made, the advantage hereby given to the Rectors or Vicars is manifest. The Curate will naturally be afraid to appeal from the proceedings of his diocesan or official, and therefore must patiently submit to any determination of revoking any licence he may have heretofore obtained; and it would operate almost as effectually as a prohibition, should he attempt to do it, and fail of redress, by deterring incumbents from employing him, lest he should take the advantage of procuring a licence in consequence of such employment, contrary to their wishes. But the incumbent, by such an appeal, has nothing to fear, should he fail in his attempt to get a licence revoked; he will still be left in possession of his benefice, and it cannot perhaps be very material to him, provided his cure is served, whether it is performed by any one man in preference to another, but only as it may sometimes prevent him
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from giving a nomination to some friend or acquaintance, in order to his admission into holy orders.

And from hence may be deduced a very striking advantage to be obtained from this Act, by the rendering such grants of licences more general, and never revoking them but on the strongest grounds. The Bishops will by this means know the actual situation of their clergy, instead of being kept in uncertainty, as at present, from their fluctuating state; and Curates will be rendered more permanent and settled, and less liable to be removed from place to place, because many of the causes that have hitherto existed to produce and occasion these continual changes will be annihilated by a due operation of the Act. By the general grant of licences, and a transfer or indorsement on removal to other parishes within the same diocese; by suffering no Curates to officiate without licences, except occasionally in the absence of the proper Curates or persons regularly performing the duty of any parishes; a check would always be at hand to discover the propriety or impropriety of nominations or titles for orders, and the diocesan would thereby at all times understand how far such nominations or titles corresponded with the purposes for which they profess to be given. It will be unnecessary for me in this respect to en-

large on the advantages of such a regulation, as the clauses of this Act will enable the Bishops or their Officials to pursue.

Thus have I endeavoured to point out and fairly to state the tendency of the Bill as it originated in the House of Lords, with the nature and probable operation of the clauses introduced and added in the other house; and I shall now proceed, as already intimated, to address myself to those gentlemen of the late

HOUSE OF COMMONS

who thought proper to manifest so strong an opposition to the last clause or section of the Bill, as originally produced by the Lords in the Upper House of Parliament, and to occasion the introduction of that clause of the Act which inflicts so heavy and unmerited a penalty on Curates in certain cases.

And, first, I would ask those gentlemen, Whether they really designed to give a fatal wound to religion, through the sides of its ministers, under the specious pretence of abridging, what they chuse to call, an undue authority in the superiors of our established church? or, to say the least, can it be unfair to ask them, Whether they really meant to throw such a stumbling-block before the
inferior

inferior Clergy of the Church established, as should amount to a prohibition of all relief? One would charitably hope, that they could not be influenced by either of these alarming motives; but one has too much cause to fear, that persons who could hazard the loss of a bill that promised relief to such an oppressed body of men in these times of distress, could not be actuated by any very auspicious principle. When the exercises of humanity have been so liberal throughout the kingdom, it does not seem to comport with the character of any who would not wish to be deemed enemies to humanity and religion, to refuse the necessary aid to such a body of men; or to clog the provisions of a bill, that professes to grant a further support and maintenance with such restraints, as must, had they succeeded in expunging the last clause, have rendered its operation a mere nullity. I speak not of those who thought proper to resist it, not from any objection to its principle, but from the jealousy of infringement on the privileges of the Lower House of Parliament, however I may venture to differ from them in opinion; but in this I am supposing them to be otherwise friendly to the measure of administering relief to the necessitous Curates of this kingdom.

If the ostensible Reason for making such objections is admitted, and we are not at liberty to form
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any other criterion by which the question may be determined; I may ask, secondly, What is the extent of this very great authority which is so much dreaded by gentlemen to be confirmed to the Bishops, in behalf of the inferior Clergy? To which I answer, that it only extends to an enlargement of the limits and provisions of the Act of the 12th of ANNE from fifty pounds to seventy-five pounds, and, in certain cases, to what shall be tantamount to ninety pounds a year. But does not that Act of ANNE direct, that the Bishop or Ordinary shall have " Regard to the Greatness of the Cure and Value of the Living before granting any Licence and appointing a Stipend" under that Act? And is not this discreet and prudent intimation recited also *verbatim* in the Preamble or first Clause of the present Act, to shew that they ought not to be unmindful of these considerations? And is it to be supposed, that the Bishops or Ordinaries would now be more regardless of them than they were in the time of Queen Anne? Are the present bench of Bishops less noted for humanity, or less attentive to the calls of justice and equity, than their predecessors were above 80 years ago? Are they less friendly to the beneficed Clergy, or more partial to the stipendiary Curates, than were those who possessed the same dignities at that earlier period? Is the provision of ninety pounds a year, putting
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it, for argument's sake, at the highest, any extraordinary recompence in the present times for a heavy Cure and the maintenance of a family in a town? Can it be esteemed nearly equal to fifty pounds so long ago as in the year 1714? Or is it to be imagined that any of the Bishops would so far commit themselves, and hazard their character for a discreet and prudent exercise of their prerogative, to assign a stipend which the duty would not warrant, or the value of the benefice fairly admit? In no single instance whatever can such an abuse of their power, where licences have been granted under nominations, be adduced. If none of these things can be duly urged, and I believe I may venture to call upon any person honestly and manfully to avow them, if he thinks they can; on what plea can the opposition be justified that has been so wantonly made on this occasion? And is this all that is meant by enabling the Bishops to put their hands in the pockets of the beneficed Clergy? Does it empower the Bishops to do any thing more than what ought to be done by every Rector and Vicar in the kingdom who employs a Curate? And does not this authority place Bishops in the situation of mediators, which they certainly ought to be between the different classes of their Clergy?

But it may be said, that the incumbents are the best

best judges of what is a suitable income. This is nothing less than a reverting to the old situation, and making the parties on one side the arbiters of their own cause, should any disagreement of opinion arise respecting the quantum of stipend to be allowed to Curates? Does it not also convey an implied censure on the justice and equity of the Bishops of the respective dioceses? Little surely need be said to demonstrate the futility and absurdity of such a plea; yet as this may not perhaps be fully satisfactory to my readers, or deemed a complete vindication of my subject, I will just say a word or two to the members of the

NEW PARLIAMENT

before I attempt to obviate or refute the objection just mentioned. But to such of you as were in the last Parliament, and these are expected to form a very large majority of the whole house, if we may form any judgment from the apparently pacific tendency that prevails in many places, it will be unnecessary to add any thing to what I have already intimated; and I may likewise fully persuade myself, that it will be altogether as unnecessary to enlarge upon what may be deemed a proper line of conduct on this subject to be pursued by the new Members. If what I have represented respecting the additional clauses of the Lower House has any foundation,

foundation, and surely there is some reason to give it a due consideration, before it is rashly pronounced as irrelevant and improper ; I would hope there is honesty enough to be found amongst both classes of Members, the old and the new, to induce them to consider these very serious and alarming clauses, that are to hang suspended over the heads of the poor unsuspecting and unoffending Curates, like a drawn sword, only by a single hair. It will be of importance, therefore, and an Act of the highest humanity, to consider very maturely the nature and probable operation of these clauses ; and in these views, must it not consequently appear highly to the credit of the episcopal bench, and to the true design of the Curates Bill as it came from the Upper House, that these additional clauses should be expunged, or the most objectionable parts of them at least removed by an amendment of the Act ? But as what I have already said of the late House of Commons will be equally applicable to the New Parliament, I may therefore dismiss this branch of my subject, and proceed to address myself to the

BENEFICED CLERGY,

for whom so much has been said, without doors at least, at the expence of the Bishops and the inferior Clergy.

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To these I would say, and I mean not to give any just cause of offence by saying it, but only to do justice to this momentous subject, Would you not wish to see your Curates in such a situation in point of income, as should place them above the temptation of being corrupted to betray your interest, by any of their parishioners? Can you declare honestly and conscientiously that this is their case at present? If it is not, are you not in duty bound to advance their stipends, so far as your benefices will fairly permit, in such a degree that they may be rendered independent of the parishioners, which only can prevent every reasonable ground of temptation? For you must remember that they are no more than men, whatever refined sentiments education may have been the means of implanting in their breasts; and when the pressure of the times and the burdens of a family have confined them within a very narrow and contracted limit, when a good dinner and a chearful glass (whether of stout October, wine, or other exhilarating cordial), is rendered a desirable object, to leave a better share out of the homely and perhaps scanty supply for the poor dependants at home, and as a recruit to his own enfeebled spirits; when a compliance with the humour and caprice of the independent farmer or the self-important yeoman is the price to be paid

paid for this civility; and when a connivance with the vices probably of his *friendly* host, and perhaps a knowledge of fraud in the matter of tithes or other rights and emoluments belonging to the incumbent, must be smothered in return for this hospitality; may it not be asked, with a heart-felt emotion, whether flesh and blood, under such circumstances, can resist the gilded bait, and refuse the comfortable accommodation of a plentiful entertainment and a copious and luxurious meal from what many persons would deem, a squeamish regard to duty? Besides, is it not commonly more than an equal chance, that the Curate, by affronting the farmer or yeoman, and giving him cause to suspect that he is unfriendly to the frauds which are practised continually to the prejudice of his Rector or Vicar, is rendered the object of distrust and animosity? And does he not deprive himself thereby of the only solace he has, and of the only society he can hope for, without the possibility, too frequently, of benefiting his employer, or even of giving any satisfaction to, or receiving any thanks from him? And will not such farmer or yeoman, when once this demon of jealousy and suspicion has pervaded his breast, embrace the earliest opportunity he has (and a person in such a situation will not long want an opportunity of do-

ing mischief), to exert his influence in removing this troublesome or suspected Curate, by some manœuvre or other, from his present employment? And will he not console himself with the reflection of having performed a laudable service, to rid the parish of so unwelcome an intruder into matters that do not concern him?

Is it not then a desirable object, to prevent all these evils, that the stipends of the Curates should be raised to a more comfortable level? Is it not expedient that you should submit to lessen your own income in a small degree for this laudable purpose? It may be urged, perhaps, that you cannot afford to make any considerable advance, or materially to diminish your own income; and in many instances, this plea will certainly be allowed as a very fair one, and in all cases will doubtless meet with mature consideration from the Bishop or Official of your diocese. But if self-partiality prevails on both sides; if the Curate likewise thinks that you ought reasonably to afford him more, and you are of opinion that you cannot comply with his ideas without much injury to yourself; is not the Bishop the proper judge between you? And may not you safely trust your case with him, who certainly will never countenance or support the Curate in any exorbitant or unreasonable demand? Will not this, too, prevent all cause of animosity

animosity or ill-will between the incumbent and the person whom he employs ? and if the Curate is dissatisfied with the decision of his diocesan, will he not be at Liberty, as soon as an opportunity offers of improving his situation, to decline your employment, and leave you in possession of the privilege of appointing another ? And will you not also, after such determination of the stipend that may be proper for serving such cure, have an unerring guide, unless some considerable alteration in value of the living should take place, to direct you on every such future occasion ? Besides, what Curate of common honesty, when thus placed out of the reach of temptation to connive at the undue practices of the parishioners, would not still consider it as a duty to intimate, from time to time, such measures as might be a means of improving the profits of such living ? And, generally speaking, might not the incumbent, so far from being injured in his income, by any reasonable advance of stipend to the Curate, ultimately be benefited by that independance in which his Curate would, by the operation of the clause thus wantonly opposed, be comfortably placed ? Instead of the abject dependant, he would become the faithful and trusty friend ; instead of the pusillanimous hireling, he would be converted into the honest and confidential representative.

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On the whole, is it not manifest that by the operation of this clause, about which so much has been said, the condition of the Rectors and Vicars will generally be greatly improved, instead of being injured, and the comfort of the inferior Clergy at the same time ensured and provided for? Is it not then manifestly for your interest, your satisfaction, your peace of mind, and certainly you would at the same time have the consciousness of knowing that you are at once serving the Cause of Religion and the claims of humanity and justice, to unite as one man to ensure the full effect of this clause, which has an evident tendency to secure so many essential and important advantages? And do not you really feel on a due consideration of what has been stated in these pages, that it will be a most effectual means of restoring the decaying and drooping credit of Religion; of that Religion, in defence of which it is incumbent on all its Teachers and Ministers to exert themselves in every laudable way? And when it is considered that it must generally operate to the advancement of your incomes, rather than the diminution, as is pretended, can there be an individual amongst you who will hesitate for a moment to promote a measure that is replete with so many advantages, by every means in his power?

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It remains only that I should apologize for presuming to defend a measure, which the

EPISCOPAL BENCH

are so much better qualified to maintain, both from their superior station, exalted talents, and a knowledge of the circumstances preparatory to and attendant on the introduction of the Curates Bill into the Upper House of Parliament. But the reflections of an humble Curate, in a case which so nearly concerns himself, and so many hundreds, I had almost said thousands, more of his brethren in a similar situation, will be favourably interpreted by this august and dignified body. They will acquit me of presumption and arrogance, in the feeble but honest attempt to express the result of my own observation and experience. They will be fully satisfied, from what has occurred to many of them in the discharge of their episcopal functions, that the suggestions contained in these pages are not the reveries of idle and visionary speculation, but deduced from facts that must have been well known by their Lordships.

Of the apprehensions to be entertained by the inferior Clergy, on the operation of the clauses introduced into the Act by the House of Commons,

mons, their Lordships will much better judge than I can either presume or pretend to. If they are well-founded, I am satisfied of the extension of their indulgent approbation and favour to an humble individual, who has only to regret the want of means to be as extensively useful as possible to his fellow-creatures in general, and his professional brethren in particular. Should they be of a different opinion, their candour at least will be readily bestowed for the credit of an upright and benevolent intention, however I may have erred in the mode of manifesting it. In this latter case, indeed, I have the consolation to hope, that, in rendering those apprehensions groundless, they will have the goodness to pursue that generous principle which dictated the Bill in its original state; which I humbly trust may be effected, by their causing such general rules and directions to be issued for the operation of this Act in granting licences and regulating the benefits of Parsonage Houses to resident Curates, as may counteract the penalties of the restraining clause, and prevent the serious and alarming consequences to be dreaded from it in its present unqualified state. But the justice of allowing a reasonable period for resuming the grants of such houses to Curates must be manifest; and, I sincerely trust, will never be overlooked in any case where the propriety and expediency

diency of the incumbent's re-possessing such premises shall be made to appear. Much of the dreaded evil will by this means be done away ; and, to the honour of the present Bench of Bishops, there will be little doubt of their exercising the powers allowed them by this Act, in the most liberal and indulgent manner, and considering this circumstance as fairly implied in the " terms and " conditions to be observed on the part of the " Curate," and consequently as proper to be introduced into such grant. The gratitude which Curates will feel for their diocesans will be so very lively and impressive, that if these regulations are not through some mistake or omission overlooked and forgotten in the issuing such grants or revocations of grants, these penalties, it may fairly be presumed, will never at any time be incurred. Having offered my sentiments of the danger and the remedy appendant on this clause, their Lordships will do me the justice to believe, that a real concern for the comfort and welfare of my brethren of the inferior Clergy has been the principal inducement to my writing these pages. The result will, I trust, be such as to demonstrate that my time and talents, such as they are, have not been wholly thrown away.

But if I did not fear to be too troublesome and presuming, it might not be improper to suggest a

few observations particularly respecting the worthy

METROPOLITANS

of our established Church, on the subject of the appeal from the Bishops of Dioceses or their officials within their respective provinces. As a native of one of the Provinces of this kingdom, and at present and for many years past an humble labourer of the vineyard in the other Province, I may be permitted by the candid and indulgent Primates of both to feel an interest in the welfare of both.

It is not very probable, that appeals of this nature will be frequent. Few of the Clergy, whether of the beneficed or inferior classes, will consider it as an eligible or gracious measure to dispute or controvert the proceedings of their diocesans, with respect to licences. It will be deemed an extremely indelicate step, to call in question the rectitude and honour of the respective Bishops on such occasions. Our amiable Metropolitans, it is humbly hoped, will not be forward to countenance and encourage such appeals; which, from what has been already intimated, will very seldom apparently come from the Curates, and, when they are made by the beneficed Clergy, must imply at least a doubtful and suspicious intention, and will therefore

therefore be received with great caution and distrust.

These intimations, thus brought forward by an humble individual, on a subject wherein the credit of his superiors and the welfare of his equals are so nearly interested, have only to crave the generous and candid protection of those superiors. They have been dictated with the most benevolent intentions; and it is only necessary to hope, that this motive will sanction and ensure the approbation of those who can give them importance, whatever may be the defects and imperfections in the manner of communicating them.

The injustice of small and inadequate stipends to Curates is manifest from their consideration of expence attending their education. This also, as well as the means of living, is more than doubled, perhaps trebled, since the time of Queen ANNE, when the former regulating Act was passed. It is notorious that the expences of most young men, who are brought up for the clerical profession, are such, that a life annuity of much greater value than the best Curacies, a very few indeed, if any, excepted, might be purchased with the money. To this may be added the unavoidable and

continued expence of books, not barely during a course of academic studies and exercises, but throughout the course of their Ministry, for which some proportion of income ought reasonably to be reserved. Of those, on the contrary, who cannot appropriate such a part of their income, to obtain the means of improving their minds, and increasing their stores of learning by a knowledge of what is passing in the literary world, either for or against religion, the disadvantages must be extreme. But these resources afford the means of guarding their people against the dangers of infidelity or scepticism on the one hand, as on the other they enable them to furnish their own minds with additional arguments and motives for persevering in religion, and exerting themselves to defend their own religion in particular. To withhold those resources is, therefore, in the highest degree injurious to Religion; and the generous and liberal augmentation of stipends of Curates, on the contrary, by virtue of the late Act for that purpose, will operate as a substantial means of defence.

Little more needs to be said on the subject of the Act I have been considering. It remains only that I should address my brethren, the

CURATES

of this kingdom on the proper conduct to be pursued

fued by them, to ensure their partaking of the advantages that have been given them by the late Act for their better maintenance and support.

I have intimated already my doubts how far the provisions of this Act may be defeated and annulled by civil contracts and agreements. The Act of Queen ANNE, it is well known, has been frequently evaded by the imprudence of Curates who have engaged in such contracts. The increase of stipend made by the Bishops or Ordinaries has often been proved to avail nothing, when a positive agreement has been entered into; and Curates have found their error on many occasions, when it was out of their power to rectify it afterwards. Indeed the power of withholding nominations, that were heretofore indispensibly required from Rectors or Vicars to enable Curates to take out licences, except on ordinations when they must be given, frequently obliged Curates to chuse this alternative as the lesser evil; but the result was, as I have already stated, and they were left without any other remedy than a removal from their situation as soon as convenient.

But, thanks to our benefactors, the case of Curates is now far otherwise. We have now the consolation to find, that we can procure licences in consequence of being employed, and that a refusal
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of nomination on the part of the incumbent will be of no avail. We have only therefore to resist the overtures that may be made to induce our entering into civil contracts, and we are safe. It is our duty to resist them, if they should be made, that we may not prove ourselves unworthy of reaping the advantages procured for us; it is our duty also, to which from the gratitude we owe to our benefactors, we ought inviolably to adhere. Shall we wilfully put out our eyes, after we have been enabled thus clearly to see our improving condition? shall we unthinkingly turn our backs on the advantages procured for us, and thereby manifest our incapacity to partake of the bounty we have received? It is your own fault, Curates, if you do not avail yourselves of the wonderful and unexpected relief that has been recently secured to you by your superiors by the Act I have been considering.

Yet, warmly as I feel for the gracious countenance glowing from the hearts of our benefactors, it behoves us calmly and prudently to wait for the gradual extension of this happy provision that is made for us, by the generous and humane exertions of our superiors. Let us not, by any untoward proceedings or restless anxiety, unreasonably harass or teaze our respective diocesans or their officials to exercise this authority unseasonably or violently; that we may not incur the dislike of our superiors, but allow them sufficient leisure and opportunity

opportunity to learn the true state of the various livings in their respective dioceses, the nature and quantity of the duty performed in each parish, and the value of the living on a fair average, to enable them to judge in what respects and to what extent the operation of the Act may duly, reasonably, and equitably apply to each.

Thus briefly have I endeavoured to fulfil a duty to my brother Curates, and to exercise my slender talents for the service of the inferior Clergy. But it has been no less my endeavour to point out some of the advantages it will be productive of to the beneficed Clergy. In the suggestions offered to the episcopal bench in general, and to the metropolitans in particular, on the operation of the Act in its present state, I have presented my thoughts with all due submission and grateful respect. And what I have also presented to the consideration of the Members of the late Parliament, and suggested to those of the New Parliament, when compared with and applied to the history of the origin, progress, and conclusion of the bill before it passed into a law, will, I sincerely hope, meet with that attention and respect which the importance of the subject fully merits. I have nothing more to add, but to beg the Almighty's blessing on this feeble and unworthy but honest and faithful

ful attempt, to promote the interests of that
 sound, pure, and vital spirit of religion which has
 been so long established in these kingdoms, to
 the honour and glory of his name, and to the
 comfort and satisfaction of his faithful people.

May 24th, 1796.

FINIS.
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